



Dear Mr. Brady and Members of Cuyahoga County Council:

The League of Women Voters strongly urges that Council members not propose a charter amendment that would change the appointive office of County Sheriff to an elective office. Making the Sheriff's office independent of the Executive Branch of county government would not automatically end problems at the County Jail, and it would contradict one of the main principles of our new charter government – clear lines of responsibility and accountability. To elaborate:

1. Council would lose the power to confirm a Sheriff nominee; the elected County Executive would lose the power to oversee that department's operations or to replace its leadership if necessary. Removing an errant or neglectful Sheriff or administrator would likely require impeachment, indictment, or enough patience to wait until the next partisan primary election.
2. An elected Sheriff would likely be a politically selected and endorsed official running in an uncompetitive or unopposed general election where he or she would have to seek locally influential backers and campaign contributions. Standards and qualifications would not count. After the first 4-year term, the likelihood of repeated unchallenged re-election is huge.
3. An independent Sheriff's Office could bring with it an independent employment system (read patronage and cronyism) and a large County workforce that would not be subject to the strong new county ethics provisions in the County Code. Other uniform administrative tools might also be lost over time.

The League urges you not to consider returning the Office of the Sheriff to the political arena. Electing the sheriff would be a step back in the wrong direction and would solve nothing.

Respectfully,

Audrey Morris and Susan Murnane, Co-Presidents  
League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland